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# Various Black Virginians as Told to Daryl Cumber Dance

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VARIOUS BLACK  
VIRGINIANS AS TOLD  
TO DARYL CUMBER  
DANCE

*Shuckin' and Jivin': Folklore from Contemporary Black Americans, published in 1978, derived from fieldwork done for a doctoral dissertation at Virginia Commonwealth University by Daryl Cumber Dance (the only woman named Daryl I*

*have heard of aside from Daryl Hannah). She gathered stories and verses from black Virginians in colleges, senior citizens' centers, and a penitentiary. Though she doesn't bring to the party an editorial touch as enlivening as Zora Neale Hurston's, she has an ear and—unlike far, far too many assiduous collectors of folktales—knows how to capture vocal rhythms on a page.*

## from *Shuckin' and Jivin'*

### I AIN'T SCARED O' YOU

My mother said back in their days, you know, they used to call each other Aunt [pronounced *ahnt*] and everything. They didn't say *Mrs.* Julia Jennings, or *Mrs.* So and So. They used to call 'em Aunt Julia. So they say, Aunt Julia was awfully scared of thunder storms, and say every time she see a black cloud comin' she would always try to make her way to somebody's house. She say, but that day every house she went to, everybody was gone. Say, she kep' runnin', kep' runnin', kep' runnin', and say she started to the next house, went over there. The lady named Cindy. She say, "Well, I think I'll go over there to Aunt Cindy's house." Say, when she got almost there, the cloud had al-l-l-most caught her. Say, it looked like the cloud was just driving down on her. Say, she looked back there. She say, "GOD! You know I ain't running from you, but I'm just running trying to git whar somebody at. But I ain't scare o' you, 'cause I know you can reach me anywhere I go, but I ain't runnin' from you. I'm just running tryin' to get where somebody live."

### R U N N I N G

A. This fellow say he went out to the battlefield when he was a younger man. Say he was scarry, you know. So when they got out to the battlefield, say the battle had started up, and said a fellow shot at 'im. He heard the bullet pass 'im, and he turned 'round and caught up and passed the bullet.

B. And another fellow say they shot at him out in battle like that, and say one o' those high-powered bullets, say, he felt it slap right back here, SWIP! like that [striking the back of his neck] and say he carried it for 'bout a mile [dramatizing a man running too fast for the bullet to penetrate], and he stumped his toe and fell. The bullet passed on 'cross and kill a mule standing up on the hill.

## WHEN I SAY ‘‘SCAT’’

There was a fellow who had about ten or twelve cats at his house, you know, and he had ten little holes in his door. One day he had a lot of visitors to come to his house, you know—men friends. And so one of ’em said to ’im, say, “John,” say, “why is it that you have so many *holes* in that door? You got ten cats, but all of ’em can go out one hole, can’t they?”

He say, “Yeah, but when I say ‘Scat!’ I mean scat!”

## B O O !

Here’s a lady who has invited the Pastor of her church to come and have dinner, and then she finds out that her sister in town has taken ill. She’s got a daughter about seventeen years old, so she tells her daughter, she said, “Now, what I want you to do is to act as if I was here. And you feed the Pastor and tell ’im what happened and everything.”

So when the Pastor came she explained it to him and everything. And of course, she cooked just as good as her mother and everything. She had a nice, lovely meal. And after the Pastor had ate, he sat there by the stove in the big chair, and *kept* looking at that young thing switching around. He laid back in that chair, and he watched her. He said, “Mary Lou!”

She say, “Yes, Reverend.”

“Have you ever been scared before?”

She say, “No, Reverend, I haven’t.”

He say, “You gone on upstairs and take off your clothes. I’m gon’ come up there and scare you in a minute.”

The Reverend went up there. WHAM! [Slap of the hand to suggest immediate success.] Man, he helped himself. Rev. come down *laughing*. “Oh-ho, my soul! Young! Tender!”

About five minutes later, he heard a lil’ tap on the bannister, say, “Reverend!”

“Yes.”

“I’d like for you to come on up here and scare me again.”

Reverend went up there and stayed about a hour. He come back down. [Dramatizing a return that is much less energetic and enthusiastic than the last one.] He’s beat now! He don’t want no more. He sat down with the paper.

Five minutes later he heard another lil’ tap on the bannister: “Reverend.”

“Yes.” [Exhaustedly.]

“I want you to come up and scare me again.”

He *crawled* up the steps, CRAWLING! He gets up there. He stays up there a

hour and a half or two hours. He comes back down [nearly dead and collapses in the chair]. He got the paper upside down.

About ten minutes later he heard a tap on the bannister: "Reverend!"

He reached up there, [hardly a whisper] "Yes."

She say, "I want you to come up here and scare me again."

He say, "Well, BOO, goddamn it!"

### JUMP ON MAMA'S LAP

Someone came to the door, and the little boy went to the door. His father asked him who was at the door, and he told him the Methodist Minister. So the father said, "Go hide all the liquor."

Then again, there was a knock on the door, and he asked him who was there. And he told him it was the Episcopalian Minister; so the father told him to go hide the food.

The next one came up was a Baptist, and he [the father] told him, say, "Go jump in Mama's lap."

### THE UGLIEST

The animals of the jungle were having a big feast. Of course, the Lion was the king and he was the head of everything. So when it was all over, the Lion rared back and say, "The ugliest thing in this group gon' wash the damn dishes."

So the Monkey start laughing and looking at the Baboon.

He say, "I don't know what in the hell you pointing at me for. You gon' dry 'em."

### YAWL USED TO IT

A white guy and a Black guy were in court for rape, and the man had sentenced both of 'em to hang. So the morning of the hanging, the white guy [was] crying, "Huhnhuhn, they gon' kill us, huhn, they gon' hang us, you know they gon' hang us."

The Black guy say, "Man, why don't you *shet* that noise up. Man, you raped the woman and beat 'er---we did all these things, and the only thing we're getting is our *just* due."

The white guy turned around and say, "Huhn [still crying], yeah, you kin talk. YAWL used to it!"

## THE SANDY BOTTOM SHUFFLE

Once there was a lovers' lane and this couple drove in lovers' lane and the cop was following them, but they didn't know it. And this old nigger, he was laying out there half drunk; so the cop drove up to him and said, "Listen, did you see a couple drive by here in a car?"

He said, "Yes, I saw 'em drive by here."

"Well, what did they do?"

Say, "They went through the bushes and they done the Sandy Bottom Shuffle."

So he said, "What do you mean by the Sandy Bottom Shuffle?" Say, "You come to court next Thursday and tell us what you saw on May the seventh."

So they went to court next Thursday, and they called this Negro up on the stand and said, "Tell this court what you saw on May the seventh."

Said, "I was out there lying on the grass in the park, half high, and this couple drove up, and they went through the bushes and they done the *Sandy Bottom Shuffle!*"

The Judge stamped his foot. He said, "Just what do you mean by the Sandy Bottom Shuffle?" He says, "We've got to make an affidavit of this case."

So the nigger asked him, said, "Well, what is an affidavit, Mr. Judge?"

He said, "That's a technicality in law that you *niggers* don't know nothing about. You come back here again next Thursday. We're going to have this trial over."

So next Thursday they went back, and he called him up on the stand again: "Tell us what you saw on the seventh, *nigger!*"

"On May the seventh I saw a couple that drove through the bushes and they done the Sandy Bottom Shuffle."

So the Judge was really mad then. He stamped his foot: "Just WHAT do you mean by the Sandy Bottom Shuffle?"

The nigger say, "That's a technicality in screwing that you *white folks* don't know nothing about."

Court was dismissed!

## WAIT TILL I LEARN

Here's a guy sticking mail [dramatizing someone throwing mail in several slots, under one leg, over his head, and so on, with unbelievable speed], BAM! BAM! BAM! BOOM! BANG! He just sticking—all up under his legs! He just stickin' it!

A guy say, "Great-t-t day! That's what I call a *clerk*! That guy kin stick some mail!"

He say [without any interruption in the speedy slinging of mail—under his arms, over his back, under his legs], "Yeah! You wait till I learn where this stuff *really* go! I'm gon' show ya sumpin."

## IF YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN

This Minister was conducting a revival in this big church. And this particular day, the church was *full*. The people had told the Minister in advance that there were a lot of sinners in the church, so the Minister preached a very stirring sermon. And after the sermon, he opened the doors of the church [asked for converts], and no sinners came up. And he was rather indignant because he knew that sinners were in his congregation. So he asked the sinners again to come up—to stand where they were. And no one would stand. So then he said, "Everyone in the church who wants to go to heaven, come over on my right side. Come over here."

So everybody went over there and stood—including the sinners—but one Deacon sat over there and he didn't move.

And so when the Preacher saw this Deacon sitting over there, he say, "Well, Brother Deacon, didn't you hear what I said?"

He say, "Yes."

He say, "Well, uh, I said, 'Everybody who wants to go to heaven, come on this side.' Why didn't you come over?"

He say, "Well, I tell ya, Reverend, I heard what you said. But I thought you were gitting up a trip to go *now*."

## HELP!

They say that, you know, when—during all this integration period—the South trying to hold up its end, you know. So they went out, and they said, "This T.V. is putting out too much, you know, about Blacks, saying it's so bad down here in Mississippi." So they went out in the back woods as far as they could to get the *dumbest* Negro they could find. And they told him, say, "Look, we gon' pay you fifty dollars to be on television, and *all* you got to tell 'em is how well we white folks treat you down here. That's *all*! Then you can go on back home. FIFTY DOLLARS! And it'll just take you a few minutes."

They carried him up there and set 'im in front the camera; they say, "We'll tell you when we ready." And they say, "You go ahead."

And say he was settin' there, you know, and he say, "Are you ready? Are you ready?"

They say, "Hold it a minute!" They had *all* the cameras and they had *all* the stations across the country opened up for it. They says, "Go ahead!"

He say, "HELP! HELP! HELP!"